

A further role for government is to be found in the funding, if not always the provision, of education. This would include such federal programs as Head Start for preschoolers; school lunches in primary schools; apprentice and school-to-work programs in high schools; and direct loans, scholarships and social service programs to facilitate enrollment in colleges and other post-secondary institutions. Government would appear needed to support the basic research on which progress in new technology and health maintenance ultimately depend. And efforts such as the earned-income tax credit and job training to get more people to work and off pure government handouts are also viewed by many, including President Clinton, as very much in order.

Republicans would generally reduce or eliminate these programs and cut taxes, most heavily for those with high incomes. They claim that this would help the economy and hence ultimately make better off the poor and less fortunate who have only been trapped in their worsening positions by the government programs designed to help them.

The current Republican revolutionaries would reduce or eliminate government programs that have been developing since the New Deal of the 1930s. To the new revolutionaries these programs injure the workings of a free-market economy that has contributed so much to our well-being. But to many others they are indispensable both to stable economic growth and the social compact on which our economic system and our society depend.

What we've been witnessing in these heated political battles is not just posturing or boys fighting in the schoolyard. There are fateful issues involved. But it is not the deficit, stupid.

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN ACT

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the Senate voted on November 8 to commit H.R. 1833, the partial-birth abortion ban bill, to the Senate Judiciary Committee for a hearing and, within 19 days, to report the bill back to the full Senate. The Judiciary Committee held a hearing on this measure on November 17. H.R. 1833 came before the Senate again yesterday, December 7, and I voted against this measure.

This is an extremely difficult issue, one which I have wrestled with a great deal. However, after carefully listening to the debate and following the Judiciary Committee hearing, I have concluded that this is a matter in which Congress should not impose its judgment over that of the medical community.

H.R. 1833, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, would criminalize a medical procedure, the partial-birth abortion. Physicians have expressed concern that the bill does not use recognized medical terms in defining partial-birth abortion, thus, creating uncertainty as to what procedures would be banned. It is my understanding that the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists oppose this bill. Beyond the concern about the terminology used to define the procedure, the college also expressed concern that Congress is attempting to impose its judgment over that of physicians in medical matters.

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing had a panel of physicians testify who could not agree about this procedure. If doctors are uncertain, I do not believe it is a good idea for Congress to ban this procedure in all instances. Although an exception for the life of the mother was adopted during this debate, the health of the mother is not taken into account. It is my understanding that this procedure, in some circumstances, may be the least risky option for a woman and may be necessary to preserve the health and the future fertility of the woman.

Also testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee were women who had this procedure. I admire these women for coming forth to relate their painful and personal experiences so that the Senate could better understand the impact of this legislation. These women were faced with the necessity of terminating their very much wanted pregnancies because their unborn babies suffered severe abnormalities. Their physicians decided that in their tragic circumstances, this procedure was the safest option.

No woman should have to face this situation. But unfortunately and tragically pregnancies do not always to as planned. Severe fetal abnormalities or the threat to a woman's life or health that may be exacerbated by pregnancy sometimes lead to the need for women and their families to make difficult decisions. These are tragic decisions women and their doctors should make without the interference of the Congress. I sympathize greatly with the women and families who unfortunately have had to face these decisions. If we enact this legislation, aren't we making the plight of women who may face this agonizing situation in the future that much more difficult by removing what may be the safest option as determined by the woman and her doctor?

In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that States can ban, restrict, or prohibit post-viability abortions except in cases where the woman's life or health is a jeopardy. In fact, 41 States have chosen to restrict abortions after viability. I believe this issue is best left to States to regulate.

Given the uncertainty in the medical community surrounding this procedure and the unprecedented step this bill takes in criminalizing a medical procedure, I voted against H.R. 1833. I do not believe that the Federal Government should be usurping the powers of the States in such matters. Nor do I believe that politicians should be involved in private decisions between patients and their doctors regarding the appropriate medical treatment of serious heart-rending and critical health matters.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the skyrocketing Federal debt is now slightly in excess of \$11 billion shy of \$5 trillion.

As of the close of business Thursday, December 7, the Federal debt—down to the penny—stood at exactly \$4,989,071,101,377.59 or \$18,938.60 on a per capita basis for every man, woman, and child.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Kalbaugh, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting a withdrawal and a nomination which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1669. A communication from the Chief of Legislative Affairs, Department of the Navy, transmitting, pursuant to law, notice relative to renewing a lease; to the Committee on Armed Services.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title:

S. 907. A bill to amend the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 to clarify the authorities and duties of the Secretary of Agriculture in issuing ski area permits on National Forest System lands and to withdraw lands within ski area permit boundaries from the operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws (Rept. No. 104-183).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 1461. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, relating to required employment investigations of pilots; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 1641. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, relating to required employment investigations of pilots; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.